

# NARRE WARREN NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Child Safe Policy

### **RATIONALE – Our commitment to Child Safety**

Narre Warren North Primary School is committed to child safety and establishing and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments where all children are valued and feel safe.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently through our policies and procedures.

We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for vulnerable children and children with a disability and in out of home care.

Our school has specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

### **PURPOSE OF THE POLICY**

This policy reflects our commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm. This includes all school environments - onsite, online activities and offsite for excursions, camps, etc. and outside of school activities.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure students are safe in all school environments and outside school hours and that they have involvement in making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. Students' views are listened to and opinions are respected and valued. We listen to and act upon any concerns that our students, or their families raise with us. We teach students what they can do if they feel unsafe.

It is important to promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children; promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally in school life.

### **GUIDELINES FOR ACTION**

1. This policy applies to all people involved in our school, including:

- employees (permanent and casual)
- volunteers
- contractors
- work experience students

- service providers
  - any other visitors.
2. Staff, volunteers and visitors must abide by our Code of Conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.
  3. At the beginning of each year staff will revisit relevant Child Safety policies and procedures. Throughout the year staff will participate in professional learning to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse; mandatory reporting, child protection and other matters that affect children and young people (annually).
  4. School Council will be made aware of relevant Child Safety policies and procedures annually. The school community will be informed about child safety practices via the newsletter and school website.
  5. The Child Safety Policy will be distributed to families at the beginning of each year.
  6. All people engaged in work at Narre Warren North PS, including volunteers, are required to carry and wear a lanyard containing their Working with Children Check. This excludes politicians. Teachers/ESS are to wear their 'school identification badge' at all times. Staff are to approach anyone not wearing their lanyard and direct them to the office.
  7. Advertisements for positions to include reference to child safety duties and responsibilities.
  8. Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that Narre Warren North PS engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. Interview and referee checks (at least 2) are to be conducted on new employees. VIT registration is a requirement of all teaching staff.
  9. All new employees and contractors will undergo induction and receive a copy of our Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct.
  10. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety (refer to Privacy Policy).
  11. Risk management strategies are to be put in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child at the school on social media).
  12. Strategies will be put in place to promote participation and empowerment of children, e.g. through Circle Time.
  13. Students will participate in the following school programs: Protective Behaviours facilitated externally (e.g. by SECASA) biennially and facilitated by classroom teachers at the beginning of each school year, Anti-Bullying programs (e.g. Cool Calm Kids) annually, Cyber Safety programs at the start of each year, Family Life, Life Education (P-2), drug education programs through the curriculum and regular Circle Time in classrooms.

14. All allegations of abuse and safety concerns will be reported to the Principal or Assistant Principal.
15. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter. It is the school's responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (refer to Mandatory Reporting Policy). Factors contributing to reasonable belief may be:
- a child states they or someone they know has been abused (noting that sometimes the child may in fact be referring to themselves)
  - behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
  - someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it
  - observing suspicious behaviour.
- Concerns are to be raised with the Principal, Child Safe Officer (Assistant Principal) or nominee in the first instance.
16. Advice to be sought from external agencies, e.g. chaplain, psychologist, to support students/staff.

### **17. Legislative responsibilities**

Our school takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.<sup>1</sup>
  - **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our school will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.<sup>2</sup>
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

18. This policy is to be read in conjunction with DET guidelines, Child Safe standards, relevant legislation (ETRA 2006 and Ministerial Order 870) and school policies related to students, visitors, volunteers and staff.
19. This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur.

Developed: June 2016

Ratified by School Council: 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016

Ratified by School Council 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Ratified by School Council: 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Ratified by School Council: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020

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<sup>1</sup> A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)

<www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

<sup>2</sup> Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)

<www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence>.

## **Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety**

The child safe standards require schools to have strategies to embed a school culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements. Protecting children from abuse is everybody's business, and a school's leadership is essential to instilling a child safety culture.

### **Leadership in a child safe environment**

Working with children can be very rewarding, and it brings additional responsibilities.

We must act to protect children from abuse and build an environment where children feel respected, valued and encouraged to reach their full potential. This requires a culture of child safety to be embedded throughout **Narre Warren North Primary School** so that child safety is part of everyone's everyday thinking and practice. Such a culture is achieved through proactive leadership in demonstrating the appropriate values, attitudes and behaviours of an organisation.

A child safe environment is the product of a range of strategies and initiatives. **Narre Warren North Primary School** fosters a culture of openness, inclusiveness and awareness. Children and adults know what to do if they observe or are subject to abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

All staff and volunteers consider the safety of all children, and recognise the importance of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cultural safety for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of vulnerable children and children with a disability.<sup>3</sup>

### **Governance in a child safe environment**

Leadership takes preventative, proactive and participatory approaches to child safety issues. The safety and wellbeing of children at **Narre Warren North Primary School** is paramount and given consideration when developing activities, policies and management practices.

### **Leadership responsibilities**

Leadership is responsible for embedding a culture of child safety at **Narre Warren North Primary School**. Leadership takes the lead in protecting children from abuse and is made aware of child abuse allegations and risks and takes responsibility for ensuring an appropriate response.

**Narre Warren North Primary School** ensures that all allegations of child abuse and child safety concerns are treated very seriously. This includes complying with all legal requirements, including reporting suspicions of child abuse to police and/or child protection.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

### **Identify and analyse risk of abuse**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** adopts an approach to prevent, detect and respond to child abuse risks. This includes a risk management strategy and policy that sets out how we identify, assess and the steps taken to reduce or remove child abuse risks.

### **Develop a child safe policy**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** has developed a child safe policy which outlines our commitment to promoting children's wellbeing and protecting children from abuse.

### **Develop codes of conduct**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** has a code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct and care required when working and interacting with children.

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<sup>3</sup> For definitions of key terms, please see [An Overview of the Victorian child safe standards:](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/___data/assets/word_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards_overview.doc)  
<www.dhs.vic.gov.au/\_\_\_data/assets/word\_doc/0005/955598/Child-safe-standards\_overview.doc>.

We also refer to professional codes of conduct where appropriate i.e. DET and VIT documents.

### **Choose suitable employees and volunteers**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with children. This includes police record and identity checks, Working with Children Checks where required, face-to-face interviews and detailed reference checks from previous employers.

### **Support, train, supervise and enhance performance**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** ensures that volunteers and employees who work with children have ongoing supervision, support and training so that their performance is developed and enhanced to help protect children from abuse. The Principal or her delegate are persons in our school who have knowledge of child safety issues and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of abuse.

### **Promote inclusion**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** is inclusive to all children and families. We have a culture that supports:

- cultural safety for Aboriginal children, for example by working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations
- cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, for example by using inclusive language and images in policy documents and communications such as the website and newsletters
- the safety of children with a disability, for example by ensuring our organisation is accessible to everyone and ensuring appropriate training and supervision of staff and volunteers working with children with a disability.

### **Empower and promote the participation of children in decision-making**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** promotes the involvement and participation of children in developing and maintaining child safe environments. For example, we provide opportunities for children to express their views on our child safe policy and code of conduct and then incorporate this feedback to improve our policies and practices. Ideas from children are sought through suggestion boxes, emails or feedback sessions.

We listen to children and take them seriously, particularly if they are disclosing abuse or concerns for their safety or the safety of other children.

A school lead for child safety should have sufficient status and authority, including leadership support and the ability to direct other staff (where appropriate), to undertake the role effectively. At Narre Warren North Primary School the Assistant Principal has this designated responsibility for child safe issues such as liaising with students, DHHS and discipline. School Leadership is responsible for updating policies including child safety. All staff are responsible for child safety.

Broad areas of the role are to:

### **PROVIDE AUTHORITATIVE ADVICE**

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to staff on matters of child safety.
- Liaise with the principal and school leaders to maintain the visibility of child safety.

- Lead the development of the school's child safety culture, including being a child safety champion and providing coordination in communicating, implementing, monitoring, enhancing and reporting on strategies to embed a culture of child safety.

### **RAISE AWARENESS**

- Ensure the school's policies are known and used appropriately.
- In conjunction with the Principal ensure the school's child safety policy is reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.
- Ensure the policy is available publicly and parents are aware of the fact that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school in this.
- Be alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and young carers.
- Encourage among all staff a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in any measures to protect them.

### **TRAIN**

Being authoritative in providing advice by:

- keeping their skills up to date with appropriate training carried out every two years
  - having a working knowledge of how the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Community Service Organisations conduct a child protection case conference to be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
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## **Standard 2: A child safety policy or statement of commitment to child safety**

### ***Narre Warren North Primary school's commitment to child safety***

Narre Warren North Primary School is committed to child safety.

- We want children to be safe, happy and empowered.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.
- We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our robust policies and procedures.
- We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety, which we follow rigorously.
- Narre Warren North Primary School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.
- Narre Warren North Primary School has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.
- Narre Warren North Primary School is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.
- We support and respect all children, as well as our staff and volunteers.
- We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

### **Our children**

The policy is intended to empower children who are vital and active participants in our school.

- We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them.
- We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.
- We promote diversity and tolerance in school, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome.

In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with a disability are safe and can participate equally

### **Our staff and volunteers**

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with children in our school.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with children.

All staff and volunteers, as well as children and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

### **Training and supervision**

Training and education are important to ensure that everyone in our school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children) to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability.

New employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand our school's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to this organisation's code of conduct to understand appropriate behaviour further). Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

### **Recruitment**

We take all reasonable steps to employ skilled people to work with children. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Our school understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage applications from Aboriginal peoples, people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and people with a disability.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check. Please see the [Working with Children Check](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) website <[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)> and our school policy for further information

We carry out reference checks to ensure that we are recruiting the right people.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

### **Fair procedures for personnel**

The safety and wellbeing of children is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations and safety concerns in the Assistant Principal's office and take appropriate steps to follow up with DHHS.

### **Privacy**

All personal information recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety.



We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it. Further information can be found in our school's Privacy Policy.

### **Legislative responsibilities**

Our school takes our legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.<sup>4</sup>
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our school will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.<sup>5</sup>
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.<sup>6</sup>

### **Risk management**

In Victoria, schools are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our children.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a child in organisations on social media). Further information can be found in our Child Safety Risk Register.

### **Regular review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years or following significant incidents if they occur.

We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute.

Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

### **Allegations, concerns and complaints**

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<sup>4</sup> A person will not commit this offence if they have a reasonable excuse for not disclosing the information, including a fear for their safety or where the information has already been disclosed.

Further information about the failure to disclose offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>

<sup>5</sup> Further information about the failure to protect offence is available on the [Department of Justice and Regulation website](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)

<[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence](https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)>.

<sup>6</sup> Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](https://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first](https://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first)>.

Our school takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

We work to ensure all children, families, staff and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).



## Standard 3: A child safety code of conduct

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### RATIONALE

Narre Warren North Primary School is committed to child safety and establishing and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments. At our school all children are valued and feel safe and have opportunities to learn and develop to the best of their ability. We have zero tolerance of child abuse.

Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment. All students have the right to be safe in all school environments; be treated with respect by staff, volunteers and visitors; and be able to work and play in a secure environment without interference, intimidation, harassment, bullying or disruption. Developing safe and stimulating learning environments, with clear expectations for appropriate behaviours, is a priority at our school.

### PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage at risk behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of Narre Warren North Primary School will support the implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct; and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide an inclusive, safe and orderly school and other learning environments. We will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

### GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

**1. All staff, visitors, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child related work at Narre Warren North Primary School are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of students by:**

- Adhering to and upholding our school's Child Safety Policy at all times.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect students from abuse.
- Treating students and families in the school community with respect, both within the school environment and outside the school environment, as part of normal social and community activities.
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another student has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation, inclusion and empowerment of Aboriginal students.
- Promoting the cultural safety, participation, inclusion and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Promoting the safety, participation, inclusion and empowerment of students with a disability.

- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a student and that if this occurs the adult can be seen by other adults (e.g. through the window and an open door).
- Reporting any allegations of student abuse to the Principal or Assistant Principal, and ensuring any allegation is reported to the police or DHHS Child Protection (refer to Mandatory Reporting Policy and Child Safety Policy).
- Reporting any student safety or wellbeing concerns to the Principal/Assistant Principal/Wellbeing Coordinator if an allegation of student abuse is made, and ensuring, as quickly as possible, that concerns are reported and that the student/s are safe.
- Encouraging students to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that directly affect them.

**2. All staff, visitors, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child related work at Narre Warren North Primary School must not:**

- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse.
- Develop relationships with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts).
- Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate sitting on laps, hugs initiated by the adult).
- Ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate.
- Put students at risk of abuse and make them feel unsafe (for example, locking students in an isolated room, intimidation, threatening comments/actions).
- Discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting.
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of students.
- Express or convey any personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of students.
- Discriminate against any student, because of culture, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or gender identity.
- Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting, etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities, or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter.
- Photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes.
- In the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

**3. This Code of Conduct is to be read in conjunction with the school's Child Safety Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy, Volunteers and Confidentiality Policy/Agreement and other relevant school policies.**

This Code of Conduct is to be read with DET policy found at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studenthood/providers/regulation/Pages/studentsafestandards.aspx>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

Ratified by School Council 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018

## **Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce child abuse**

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### **Overview**

It is important for schools to have strong human resource practices to help protect children from abuse.

**Narre Warren North Primary School** will foster a culture of openness and inclusiveness, as well as be aware that people who may wish to harm children could target specific schools. Robust human resource practices are a good way of reducing these risks. Human resource practices include the recruitment, training and supervision of all personnel.

To achieve this, **Narre Warren North Primary School** will provide opportunities for employees and volunteers to develop and maintain skills to ensure child safety. This will support staff and volunteers to understand the importance of child safety and wellbeing, and enable them to consistently follow child safety policies and procedures.

### **Child safety officer**

Employees and volunteers will be supported through the Principal and/or delegate, who are the designated persons to hear or be informed about all allegations or concerns, and provide support to other personnel. This will assist **Narre Warren North Primary School** in ensuring that child safety is prioritised and that any allegations of abuse or safety concerns are recorded and responded to consistently and in line with legal requirements, school policies / statements and procedures.

The designated persons also provide contact for children, parents and employees/volunteers to seek advice and support regarding the safety and wellbeing of children associated with **Narre Warren North Primary School**.

### **Training and induction**

Training and education is an important tool to help people understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. Employees and volunteers (in addition to parents/guardians and children) need to be supported to discuss child protection issues and to detect signs of potential child abuse.

Staff will receive induction and ongoing training. New staff will be supported and informed when they begin their new role, and existing staff might need to develop new skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of their positions and expand their career options.

Training and support also promotes an awareness of the appropriate standards of care required to be met by employees and volunteers to ensure that the school meets its duty of care when providing services to children.

It is essential that our staff commit to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, for example by signing our school's code of conduct. Training should enhance the skills and knowledge of our employees and volunteers, and reduce exposure to risks.

Employees and volunteers working with children will receive training in the following areas:

- identifying, assessing and reducing or removing child abuse risks
- understanding our policies and procedures (including the code of conduct and child safe policy)

- knowledge of legislative requirements, such as obligations to report child abuse<sup>7</sup>, reduce and remove known risks of child abuse<sup>8</sup>, and to hold Working with Children Checks<sup>9</sup> where required
- how to handle a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, including our organisation's reporting guidelines
- cultural awareness training.

Training can be formal such as:

- higher education training and accreditation
- training offered by external organisations
- training developed and delivered internally
- online 'Mandatory Reporting' unit
- induction training

Training can also be informal such as:

- inviting other professionals to speak at meetings or functions
- inviting local Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and community members to speak at meetings and events
- inviting local culturally and/or linguistically diverse community members to speak at meetings and events
- internal mentoring and coaching.

## **Supervision**

Supervision of employees and volunteers will be managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. For instance, where practical, two staff members should be present during activities with children. In particular, children with a disability may require additional supervision.

As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers will be supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs should be reported through appropriate channels, including the school's internal reporting procedures (such as the Principal and / or delegate), the Department of Health and Human Services (child protection), or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

## **Performance and development review**

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<sup>7</sup> The failure to disclose criminal offence requires adults in Victoria to report to police a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child (unless they have a reasonable excuse for not doing so). More information about [failure to disclose](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>

Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting obligations. Certain professionals are mandatory reporters, meaning they are required to report to the Department of Health and Human Services if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical and sexual abuse. More information about [mandatory reporting](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting) is available in the *Child protection manual* <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/cpmanual/intake/overview-of-intake-of-reports-under-the-children,-youth-and-families-act/1122-mandatory-and-other-required-reporting)>.

<sup>8</sup> The failure to protect criminal offence applies to people within organisations who knew of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse by someone in the organisation and had the authority to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so. More information about [failure to protect](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence)>.

<sup>9</sup> For more information about [Working with Children checks](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) visit the working with children website <[www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au)>.

A proactive performance development strategy will be used to improve employees and volunteers skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse.

Performance will be measured against the school's standards of conduct and care to ensure that employees and volunteers meet expected outcomes. These standards will align with those of the code of conduct and child safe policy / statement, so everyone can be aware of the expectations of our school and appropriate behaviour.

### **Code of conduct and disciplinary procedures**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** has a code of conduct and student Engagement Policy that provide services for children can use which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children.

Disciplinary procedures will occur if an allegation of child abuse is made, or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.

Disciplinary procedures will be accessible and transparent, and clearly demonstrate the consequences of breaches of the code of conduct.

Employees and volunteers should be aware of reporting and disciplinary procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the school.

Members of our school community should also be made aware (via the school fortnightly newsletter) of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions.

**Narre Warren North Primary School's** code of conduct and Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy will be publicly available via our school website. Children and their families will be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported.

Our disciplinary procedures will clearly outline what employees or volunteers should do if they are concerned that their actions or words have been misunderstood, or they believe their concerns are not investigated in a timely manner.

## **Standard 5: Procedures for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse**

### **Rationale**

Mandatory reporters who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse, must report their concerns to Department of Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection.

All other school staff who believe on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of:

- protection are encouraged to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police.
- therapeutic treatment is encouraged to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection.

If staff have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person they are encouraged to report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection or make a referral to Child FIRST.

In cases where staff have concerns about a child or young person they will discuss their concerns with the Principal or Delegate.

### **Mandatory Reporting:**

Mandatory reporters must make a report as soon as practicable if, in the course of practising their profession or carrying out their duties, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection, as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child

Mandatory Reporters should report to the Department of Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection

### **Who is mandated?**

- Teachers registered to teach or who have permission to teach pursuant to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic)
- Principals of government and non-government schools
- Registered medical practitioners
- Nurses
- All members of the police force

### **Child in Need of Protection:**

Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection for any of the following reasons:

- The child has been abandoned and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.
- The child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and their parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
- The child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

The child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be significantly harmed and the parents are unable or unwilling to provide basic care, or effective medical or other remedial care

### **Who should make the report?**



- Any person (reports to DHHS or Victoria Police)

### **Child in Need of Therapeutic Treatment:**

Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child under 15 years of age, is in need of therapeutic treatment because he or she has exhibited sexually-abusive behaviours.

#### Who should make the report?

- Any person (report to DHHS or Child FIRST)

### **DUTY OF CARE:**

All members of Narre Warren North Primary School staff have a duty of care to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care.

If a staff member has concerns about the safety, health and wellbeing of children in their care it is important to take immediate action.

In the case of a child who may be in need of protection or therapeutic treatment, or where there are significant concerns about the wellbeing of a child, school staff can discharge this duty of care by taking action which includes the following:

- Reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or other appropriate agency (Child FIRST, Victoria Police)
- Notifying the Principal or delegate of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

### **TYPES OF ABUSE OR INDICATORS OF HARM**

Child abuse can have a significant effect on a child's physical or emotional health, development and wellbeing. The younger a child the more vulnerable he/she is and the more serious the consequences are likely to be.

Types of child abuse include:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- medical neglect
- family violence.

Other reports to DHHS Child Protection may be needed for:

- risk-taking behaviour
- female genital mutilation
- unborn child
- child or young person exhibiting sexually-abusive behaviours.

There are many indicators of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single indicator, or even several indicators, does not prove that abuse or neglect has occurred. However, the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the occurrence of several indicators together, should alert teachers to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

## **MAKING A REPORT**

Narre Warren North Primary School should make a report in the follow way:-

1. Staff should keep comprehensive notes that are dated and include the following information:
  - Description of the concerns (e.g. physical injuries, student behaviour)
  - Source of those concerns (e.g. observation, report from child or another person)
  - Actions taken as a result of the concerns (e.g. consultation with principal, report to DHHS Child Protection).
2. School staff should discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the Principal or Assistant Principal. The individual staff member should then make their own assessment about whether they must or may make a report about the child or young person.
3. School staff should gather the relevant information necessary to make the report. This should include the following information:
  - Full name, date of birth, and residential address of the child or young person
  - Details of the concerns and the reasons for those concerns
  - The individual staff member's involvement with the child and young person
  - Details of any other agencies who may be involved with the child or young person
4. Make a report to the relevant agency.
5. Make a written record of the report which includes the following information:
  - The date and time of the report and a summary of what was reported
  - The name and position of:
    - the person who made the report
    - the person who received the report.
6. Notify relevant school staff and/or Departmental staff of the report.
  - School staff should advise the Principal or Assistant Principal if they have made a report.
  - In the case of international students, the Principal must notify the International Education Division of the Department on (03) 9637 2990 to ensure that appropriate support is arranged for the student.
  - In the case of Koori students, the Principal must notify the Regional Office to ensure that the regional Koori support officer can arrange appropriate support for the student.
7. Notify the Victoria Police if there is concern that a criminal offence may have been committed.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF MAKING A REPORT**

### Confidentiality:

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless

- The reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or parent of the report.
- The reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed.
- A Court or Tribunal decides that it necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.

- A Court or Tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to provide evidence.

#### Professional Protection:

If a report is made in good faith:

- it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter.
- the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.

#### Interviews:

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police may conduct interviews of children and young people at the school without the parent's knowledge or consent.

Interviewing children and young people at school should only occur in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the best interests of the child to proceed in this manner.

DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police will notify the Principal or delegate of their intention to interview the child or young person on the school premises.

When DHHS Child Protection practitioners/Victoria Police officers come to the school premises, the Principal or a member of the leadership team will request to see identification before permitting them to have access to the child or young person.

When a child or young person is being interviewed by DHHS Child Protection and/or Victoria Police, school staff must arrange to have a supportive adult present with the child or young person.

#### Support for the young child or person:

The roles and responsibilities of staff members in supporting children who are involved with DHHS Child Protection may include the following:

- Acting as a support person for the child or young person.
- Attending DHHS Child Protection case planning meetings.
- Observing and monitoring the child's behaviour.
- Liaising with professionals.

#### Requests for information:

DHHS Child Protection and/or Child FIRST and/or Victoria Police may request information about the child or family for the purpose of investigating a report and assessing the risk to the child or young person.

In certain circumstances, DHHS Child Protection can also direct school staff to provide information or documents about the protection or development of the child. Such directions should be in writing and only be made by authorised persons within DHHS Child Protection,

## Witness Summons:

If DHHS Child Protection makes a Protection Application in the Children's Court of Victoria, any party to the application may issue a Witness Summons to produce documents and/or to give evidence in the proceedings.

### **3. Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed every four years according to the policy review structure implemented by the Education Committee.

### **4. Resources**

- DET website: Related Legislation –
  - ✓ *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*
  - ✓ *Crimes Act 1958*
  - ✓ *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
  - ✓ *Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001*

Guidelines for Managing Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance in the Teaching Service.

Website – <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/conduct.aspx>

When there is a complaint the above publication will be used and steps followed as mandated by DET.

Complaints against an employee may arise from:

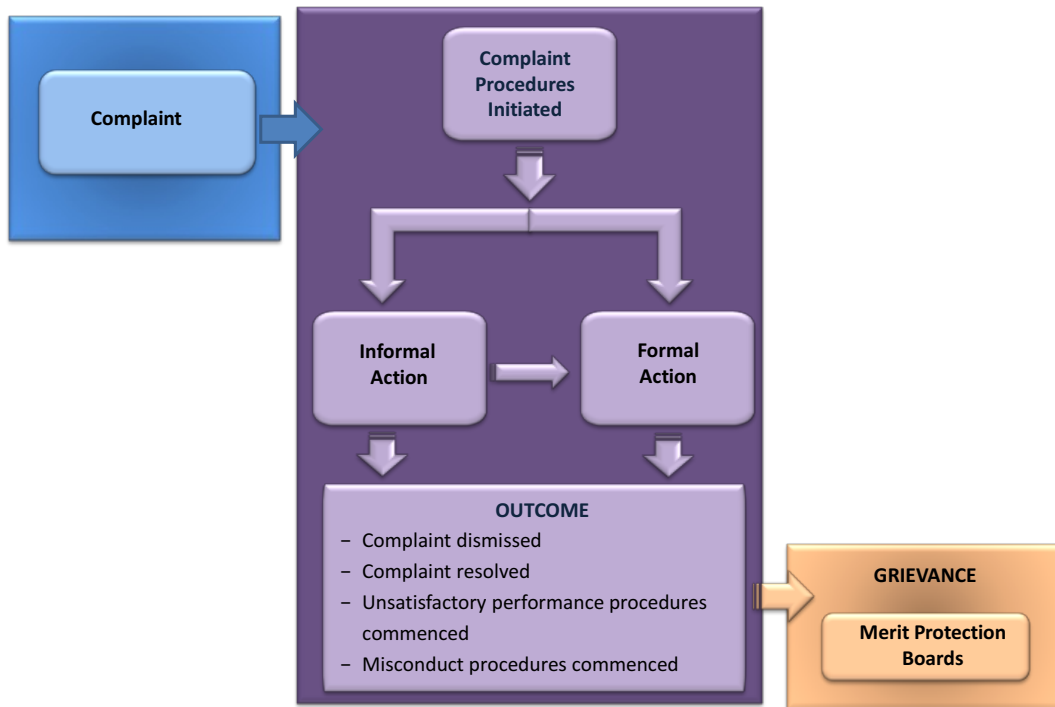
- unprofessional conduct and/or unsatisfactory performance
- allegations of aggressive, demeaning or uncooperative behaviour
- a particular incident
- allegations of unlawful discrimination (for example, discrimination on the ground of a protected attribute such as race, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender, family responsibilities) or racial or religious vilification
- allegations of unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment
- allegations of bullying, as defined by the Victorian WorkCover Authority
- decisions made, or not made, by the principal/manager that a complainant believes are unfair, unreasonable or inappropriate.

The principal/manager must ensure that a complaint is dealt with in a way that is both procedurally and substantively fair.

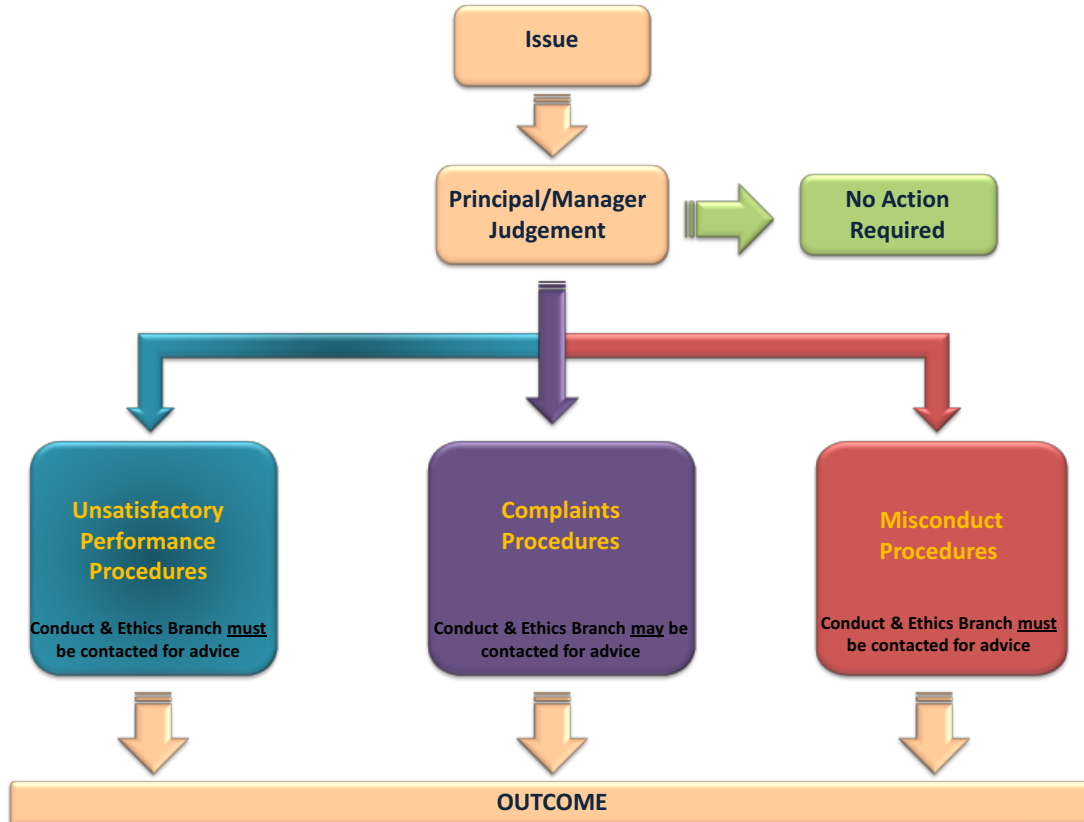
It is important that all steps in the complaints process are documented.

The principal/manager can provide advice regarding the process for making a complaint.

## Procedures for Managing Complaints



In relation to a particular issue or incident, the principal/manager will need to make an assessment as to the appropriate course of action to take as illustrated below:



Examples of misconduct and other grounds for action under Division 10 include but are not limited to:

- inappropriate relationships with students
- harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying or victimisation of other staff members, students or the public
- racial or religious vilification
- striking a student, other employee or member of the public, or otherwise inflicting harm on, or endangering the life of, another person
- wilfully damaging property
- unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment
- sexual or other criminal offences
- improper use of information, or school or Department resources, for private purposes or personal gain
- refusal to obey a lawful instruction
- alcohol or drug misuse affecting the employee's performance of their duties
- serious or gross negligence
- inappropriate use of the internet or the Department's information technology resources including, for example, accessing pornography
- medical certificate fraud
- conduct involving dishonesty, wilfulness or recklessness, loss or damage.

Allegations dealt with under Division 10 may include conduct outside, as well as inside, the workplace – for example where the employee has failed to maintain the general standards of conduct required in the public sector or where the behaviour contravenes the requirements of [Ministerial Order No 199](#), which sets out the conduct and duties required of employees in the teaching service. Order 199 requires employees to not behave in any way which would impair their influence over students or standing in the community generally, or outside the hours of duty act in any manner unbecoming his or her position.

**If a child discloses an incident of abuse to you**

- Try and separate them from the other children discreetly and listen to them carefully.
- Make a dated file note of the information.
- Let the child use their own words to explain what has occurred and document as the information is shared.
- Reassure the child that you take what they are saying seriously, it is not their fault and that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain to them that this information may need to be shared with others, such as with their parent/carers, specific people in your organisation, or other organisations who have responsibility for keeping students safe.
- Do not make promises to the child such as promising not to tell anyone about the incident, except that you will do your best to keep them safe.
- Do not leave the child in a distressed state. If they seem at ease in your company, stay with them.

- As soon as possible after the disclosure, record the information using the child's words and report the disclosure to your manager or your organisation's child safety officer/champion,<sup>10</sup> police or child protection.
- Ensure the disclosure is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

### **If a parent/carer says their child has been abused in your organisation or raises a concern**

- Explain that we have processes to ensure all abuse allegations are taken very seriously.
- Ask about the wellbeing of the child.
- Allow the parent/carer to talk through the incident in their own words.
- Advise the parent/carer that you will take notes during the discussion to capture all details.
- Explain to them the information may need to be repeated to authorities or others, such as the Principal and/or delegate, the police or child protection.
- Do not make promises at this early stage, except that you will do your best to keep the child safe.
- Provide them with an incident report form to complete, or complete it together.
- Ask them what action they would like to take and advise them of what the immediate next steps will be.
- Ensure the report is recorded accurately, and that the record is stored securely.

Some children with a disability may experience barriers disclosing an incident. For example, children with hearing or cognitive impairments may need support to help them explain the incident, including through sign language interpreters. Advice on [communicating with people with a disability](#) can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/people-with-a-disability-in-the-community/communicate-and-consult-with-people-with-a-disability/communication-with-people-with-disabilities)>.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

### **Legal responsibilities**

While the child safe standards focus on organisations, every adult who reasonably believes that a child has been abused, whether in their organisation or not, has an obligation to report that belief to authorities.

The **failure to disclose** criminal offence requires all adults (aged 18 and over) who hold a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria by an adult against a child under 16 to disclose that information to police (unless they have a reasonable excuse not to, for example because they fear for their safety or the safety of another).

More information about [failure to disclose](#) is available on the Department of Justice and Regulation website <[www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence)>

While failure to disclose only covers child sexual abuse, all adults should report other forms of child abuse to authorities. Failure to disclose does not change mandatory reporting responsibilities.

More information about [mandatory reporting](#) is available in the *Child protection manual* <[www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting](http://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/advice-and-protocols/advice/intake/mandatory-reporting)>.

**Mandatory reporters** (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

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<sup>10</sup> A child safety officer/champion is a person in your organisation who has knowledge of child safety issues, and could be a point of contact for others who have questions or concerns or want to report an allegation of child abuse. You could consider including child safety officer/champion duties in the person's job description.

See the Department of Health and Human Services website for information about [how to make a report to child protection](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first) <[www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/reports-publications/guide-to-making-a-report-to-child-protection-or-child-first)>.

The **failure to protect** criminal offence (commenced on 1 July 2015) applies where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk of abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently failed to do so.

Further information about [failure to protect](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safeer+communities+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) can be found on the Department of Justice and Regulation website [www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safeer+communities+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safeer+communities+and+families/failure+to+protect+offence) and the Department of Health and Human Services website



## **Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse**

### **Description**

Narre Warren North Primary School has adopted a risk management approach which will identify and consider our student's safety risk(s) based on a range of factors including the nature of our activities with children, physical and online environments and the characteristics of children to whom we provide services. This covers both 'business as usual' risks and risks posed by specific activities such as excursions and overnight trips. Where risks are identified, Narre Warren North Primary School will employ measures to reduce or remove them.

### **Rationale**

Narre Warren North Primary School has an active approach to our duty of care in protecting children and have a risk management approach and a commitment to continuous improvement. Additionally, the implementation of our risk management approach is recognition of Narre Warren North Primary School's legal responsibilities to ensure the safety of children.

### **How will Narre Warren North Primary School implement the 'Risk Management' approach-**

- Ensure clear and accessible processes for evaluating risks posed by situations and activities appropriate to the organisation, its size and resources, physical and online environments, and the characteristics of the children to whom it provides services.
- Develop, record and communicate clear processes for removing risks to children (for example, rules on online communications included in the code of conduct, removing staff or volunteers who may pose a risk).
- Online cyber safety training for students across the school.
- Provide relevant staff and volunteers with training in identifying child abuse risks, for example blocked-off/out-of-sight spaces (especially rooms with doors that can be locked), overnight stays, and opportunities for physical contact, such as sports coaching and personal care.
- Engage methods for continual improvement in how risks are managed by learning from past lessons, including policy review and staff training.
- Ensure training and supervision requirements for staff and volunteers who work with children.
- Institute processes for periodic review of risk management approaches and/or processes and following any incidents.
- Recognise and adapt to the needs of particular children and communities, including Aboriginal children, culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and children with a disability. For example, acknowledgement that greater staff or volunteer to child ratios may be needed for some children with a disability.
- Recognise and address risks to Aboriginal children which might exist because of their experiences, for example if a child does not feel safe identifying as Aboriginal, or if there is an inadequate response to self-identification.
- Recognise and address risks to children with a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, which might exist because of their experiences, for example increased communication with families may be necessary to build trust and understanding of organisational activities.
- Recognise and address risks for children with a disability, for example communication barriers when telling an adult they feel unsafe.
- Have a process for central reporting and advisory contact for staff to raise concerns and get advice about what to do if they need to report suspected abuse, i.e. the Principal or Assistant Principal.
- Include statements about shared responsibility for management of risks in all position descriptions.
- Have a consistent risk management approach across all areas of the school
- Include discussion about apparent risks or 'near misses' in staff and team meetings and areas for improvement.
- Roster staff with appropriate experience and qualifications to manage high risk environments such as the Welfare Room

**Successfully implementing this approach should result in Narre Warren North Primary School being a place where:**

- situational risks are considered and understood by all staff
- steps are put in place to reduce risks where possible
- risk management approaches are regularly reflected on and improved
- specific risks to Aboriginal children are identified, assessed and mitigated
- specific risks to children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background are identified, assessed and mitigated
- specific risks to children with a disability are identified, assessed and mitigated

## **Standard 7: Strategies to promote child participation and empowerment**

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### **Description**

**Narre Warren North Primary School** ensures children feel safe and comfortable in reporting concerns or allegations of abuse. **Narre Warren North Primary School** has simple and accessible processes that help children understand what to do if they want to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour or concerns for their safety.

All staff have an awareness of children's rights and adults' responsibilities regarding child abuse.

How Narre Warren North Primary School promotes participation and empowerment of children:

We provide children with child-appropriate and accessible information about what child abuse is, their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy, that no one has a right to injure them and how they can raise concerns about abuse. We have 'Life Education' visit the school annually, their programs include safety for students' issues.

- We ensure information and processes for reporting concerns are accessible to all children, e.g. through the school chaplain, principal class, teachers and ES staff. Where concerns are more serious referrals are made to DHHS or other agencies such as Child First.
- The school have a visiting psychologists who support students and their families with social/emotional and family concerns.
- We gather feedback from children, for example SATS survey, focus groups, circle time and social media, about whether they would feel safe and taken seriously if they were to raise concerns, and we then implement improvements based on this feedback.
- We enable children to express their views and make suggestions on what child safety means to them, and on child safe policies, reporting and response procedures, and acknowledge and act upon these where possible. For example, views are gathered through suggestion boxes, feedback sessions, emails or online.
- We ensure services are accessible for people with a disability, for example provide appropriate communication aids, provide access to DET psych / Speech specialists, outsource specific cases to agencies – Futures in Mind, Family Life, DHHS, etc.
- We ensure Aboriginal children are accepted when identifying as Aboriginal, and that staff and volunteers would understand appropriate responses to children identifying as Aboriginal.
- We encourage participation and empowerment of children in other organisational activities, such as organisational planning and decision making. For example – Student Leadership positions, assembly presentations, Student Leadership Conferences, student forums, JSC and Circle Time
- We raise awareness in the community about children's rights, through staff conversations with families and communications such as websites, newsletters, Parent Teacher meetings, School Council, etc.

### **By successfully implementing these strategies Narre Warren North Primary School ensures:**

- reporting procedures for when a child feels unsafe are accessible for all children
- children understand what child abuse is, and their rights (age appropriate)
- children understand how to report an allegation of abuse or concern for their safety to the organisation, a trusted adult and external bodies (for example, the police)
- children feel safe, empowered and taken seriously if they raise concerns
- children feel empowered to contribute to the organisation's understanding and treatment of child safety
- children's reports of concern are responded to appropriately
- staff understand how to empower children and encourage their participation.